



*Always Ready
Always There*

The Gem State Guardian

The official newsletter of the
Idaho National Guard

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Plan seeks to maximize Guard efficiency – reduce number of armories

IDNG Public Affairs

For the third year, the Idaho Army National Guard has submitted a proposal to Congress that would result in not only modernizing local Idaho National Guard facilities across the state, but also reducing the number of armories – or readiness centers.

This proposal, which is part of a nationwide Readiness Center Transformation Master Plan, involves setting priorities 30 to 40 years into the future, contingent on congressional approval and funding.

In 2011, Congress asked the National Guard Bureau to study readiness centers across the nation to determine if those facilities – including some constructed nearly 60 years ago – remain viable today. The average age of Idaho’s readiness centers is 44 years. Size, safety, energy efficiency, maintenance costs and location were some of the factors considered.

The 54 states and territories submitted their results to the National Guard Bureau and the final report was submitted to Congress on December 19, 2014. The Idaho Army National Guard’s study determined that all but two of the existing readiness center sites — Mountain Home and Gowen Field in Boise — have insufficient acreage for expansion. That means 24 of the 26



The readiness center for C Company of the 116th Brigade Special Troops Battalion sits on one of the only current sites across the state deemed sufficient for necessary expansion. An Idaho Army National Guard study determined that all but two of the existing readiness center sites — Mountain Home and Gowen Field in Boise — have insufficient acreage for expansion. Idaho National Guard Photo

sites do not suitably accommodate soldiers and unit equipment, and as a result are being considered for closure.

The proposal would leave Idaho with nine readiness centers in the vicinities of Idaho Falls, Pocatello, Twin Falls, Post Falls, and the Lewiston-Moscow area, as well as four in southwestern Idaho’s Treasure Valley.

“When we construct facilities, they’re built with the next 67 years in mind, and during that lifespan we can plan to conduct one major and two minor remodels in order to keep conditions safe and efficient for our personnel,” said Maj. Lee Rubel, a planning officer with the Idaho Army National Guard’s

Construction Facility Management Office. “For our buildings that were constructed in the 1950s and 60s, we need to plan the end of their life cycle.”

Encroachment is another factor. Many of these facilities were built on remote tracts of land donated to the Guard by the city or county and away from town centers. But in many cases the communities have grown and now envelope the sites, limiting their ability to expand. Additionally, federal guidelines now include new mandates regarding storage, square footage per soldier, and distances between perimeters and structures — all requiring additional space.

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“If the Guard needs to remodel a building, most likely there’s a need for additional land to expand and in most cases, the current lots are too small for additional square footage, force protection perimeters and even vehicle parking,” Rubel said.

Current personnel and future recruits also are considerations, and the demographics have changed. Recruiting populations have shifted over the past 50 years to larger regional population centers. The plan attempts to establish sites within 50 miles of these population centers. In some cases the Guard’s study found readiness centers located in communities without a single local soldier being assigned there.

South-central Idaho’s Magic Valley is considered the first to undergo consolidation because that region spans such a large area.

“It is a command and control issue for leaders of units that sprawl across a large geographical area,” said Col. Farin Schwartz, Construction Facility Management Officer for the Idaho Army National Guard. “A commander uses so much of his or her precious time just commuting while circulating though the units. This proposal would reduce that. It would also facilitate a commander’s ability to rapidly coordinate and respond to a state emergency by having personnel and equipment consolidated in regionally strategic locations.”



The Twin Falls armory above, could be the first to see the effects of the consolidation under the Readiness Center Transformation Master Plan should the Idaho National Guard’s proposal be approved and funded. This site was proposed for a number of reasons: age of the armory and land ownership are but a couple that lend themselves to the consolidation plan. Idaho National Guard photo

Each transfer of property during the transitioning process for readiness center sites will be individually evaluated. The arrangement between the State and federal governments in funding readiness center sites requires the State to provide at least 25 percent of the cost and the land, while the federal government provides 75 percent of the total cost. That amounts to a community getting a \$20 million facility for a State investment of \$5 million.

The Idaho National Guard now has facilities in St. Anthony, Rexburg,

Idaho Falls, Blackfoot, Pocatello, Preston, Burley, Twin Falls, Gooding, Jerome, Hailey, Mountain Home, Nampa, Caldwell, Emmett, Payette, Grangeville, Orofino, Moscow, Lewiston, Post Falls, Bonners Ferry, Rigby, Driggs, Wilder, and Boise.

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